

**Quarterly Job Progress Report**  
**for the**  
**Community-based Conservation Extension Specialist (CCES)**

Period of  
July-September 2001

Submitted by:  
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## Activities and Accomplishments

### **Background**

The Cooperative Agreement between Utah State University (USU) and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) that established the jointly funded position of Community-Based Conservation Extension Specialist (CCES) was signed on March 27, 2001. The two year agreement outlines activities that will be conducted by the CCES to address sage grouse conservation issues. As part of the agreement, the CCES will submit quarterly and an annual report of activities and accomplishments. Joel Flory was hired to fill the position. The report covers the period of March to June 2001.

### **Local Working Groups**

#### ***South-Central Valley LWG***

On August 2<sup>nd</sup> we held an informational meeting in regards to sage grouse conservation planning at which Dean Mitchell presented information on sage grouse in Utah and general biology. Laura Romin (USFWS) presented information on Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances and Safe Harbor in addition to the timelines for the listing process and the ramifications of federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. Representatives from the PARM group also attended to offer their endorsement. The group was in favor of officially forming a LWG.

In September another meeting was held to discuss the planning effort. This meeting was coordinated with a livestock producer's field trip and we identified and discussed several of the issues that are considered priorities by the agricultural industry in Garfield and Kane Co.

#### ***Box Elder County LWG***

On August 30<sup>th</sup>, we held an informational meeting in Tremonton. More than 30 individuals representing agency personnel, livestock producers, and concerned publics attended the meeting. The UDWR and USFWS presented information on sage grouse biology and the status of sage grouse petitions. The group was in favor of officially forming a LWG and will be meeting again on November 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### ***Strawberry Valley LWG***

In preparation for the formal formation of the Strawberry Valley LWG, I attended the Friends of Strawberry Valley Meeting. At this meeting we discussed the integration of the LWG into the already existing infrastructure of the organization that is currently concerned with all resource issues and activities that take place in the valley. The group provided their mailing list as a start in compiling a list of interested stakeholders for the sage grouse LWG.

### ***Parker Mountain (PARM)***

On August 8, 2001, we conducted a field trip on Parker Mountain to identify possible sites for a Utah prairie dog mitigation bank. Two sites were selected as possible banks. These were Flossie Knoll and the Tanks areas. Terry Messmer and Joel Flory prepared a draft management plan for the operation and management of a bank on each site. This plan was incorporated into a draft Utah prairie dog mitigation banking agreement that was prepared by Environmental Defense.

### ***San Juan County Gunnison SWOG***

Jim Keyes, Terry Messmer, and Sarah Lupis met with the San Juan County Commissioners on August 24, 2001 to update them on the status of the Gunnison sage grouse conservation planning effort. The Commissioners expressed their support of the effort and asked that we continue to provide them updates.

The SWOG technical committee met in the afternoon to discuss habitat management plans. The UDWR has begun to develop projects on the Adam's easement property. Sarah Lupis reported that the Gunnison sage grouse she was monitoring spend most of their time in established Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields. SWOG will meet in early January with local landowners to brief review past work and update them on activities planned for 2002.

### ***Other Meetings/Symposia***

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society, I presented a paper entitled "Utah's Sage Grouse Working Groups: Putting Our Communities Back Into Conservation". This paper was presented with Sarah Lupis at the Community-based Conservation Symposium.

### ***Other Projects***

Mailing lists have been developed for all the LWG's in Microsoft Access database. There are currently over 300 individuals in the database. The mailing lists are organized in several tiers in order to ensure that DWR employees from the Salt Lake Office will receive all of the LWG mailings, RAC chairpersons and regional DWR employees will receive all the mailings appropriate to their region and individuals will receive mailings only for their closest LWG. Creation of the Rich County and Uintah Basin mailing lists is in process.

In cooperation with Ron Torgerson, Utah State and Institutional Trustlands Administration (SITLA), Tom Jarmin, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and Terry Messmer (USU), I prepared a proposal for sage grouse habitat restoration project on Parker Mountain that was submitted to Intermountain West Joint Venture's small grants. This proposal addressed sage grouse habitat conditions and proposed using

the Lawson Pasture Aerator to improve nesting and brood-rearing habitat on 1,000 acres. The project was approved at the regional level and will provide \$36,000 in funding to carry out the work

I have advised the USFWS on several potential Utah prairie dog mitigation bank sites and the potential impacts of the habitat manipulations on local sage grouse populations.

Met with Scott Walker at the Great Basin Experimental Station regarding sage grouse habitat improvement operations and seed mixtures including the mechanical, chemical and fire initiated manipulation of sagebrush rangelands. This information will be vital in planning effective sagebrush habitat improvement projects across Utah.

Presented information on the status of sage grouse in Utah and the CCES efforts to the Annual meeting of the Utah Cattleman's Association meeting in Price on July 17th. At this meeting, we also introduced the group to the future formation of LWG's across the state.

Several trips to the South-Central Valley's LWG area were taken to address proposed sagebrush habitat manipulations in the Upper and Lower Bear Valley area as well as Dog Valley. An additional field trip with the BLM and UDWR occurred to discuss BLM grazing allotment renewals and their effect on sage grouse habitat.

To increase local community buy in and excitement about sage grouse conservation, sage grouse shirts have been designed and will be available on the internet for those interested in increasing recognition and awareness.

Meeting invitation letters and meeting summaries have been sent to the UDWR for uploading to the UDWR Upland Game web page.

Two field trips to Strawberry Valley were attended with the USFS Biologist and the BYU graduate students that are currently working on sage grouse issues in the valley. We evaluated some recent habitat manipulations including a prescribed burn, spike treatment and Dixie-harrow treatment that had occurred in the valley. Participated in a meeting with Wildlife Services, BYU, and the USFS to discuss past predator control activities and the response of the population. We decided on a future direction for predator management activities in the valley.

### **Future projects**

Formation of LWG's in Rich County and in the Uintah Basin will occur during the next quarter. There will be follow-up meetings for Box Elder and South-central Valleys groups. PARM and SWOG will also be meeting in the next quarter to review the most recent research findings and make plans for future efforts. Strawberry Valley will have the first informational meeting for sage grouse conservation planning.

Work will continue on the Conservation Plan template to be used by the 13 sage grouse management units in the planning process. This template should be available for review in the next quarter.